

BISMILLAH ARRAHMAN ARRAHEEM

INTRODUCTION

1 This book

Praised be Allah and peace and blessings on his Prophet.

Muslim brothers and sisters who seek to purify your souls to get closer to Allah, this book proposes you a simple and clear method. Entirely based on Coran and Sunna, this method allows you to recognize your defaults and treat them efficiently. This book traces a very clear way starting from the lowest level to the highest. This book will not replace your effort against your “nafs” - one's self – but he will allow you in sha Allah to better use your efforts to obtain better results.

The first principle of this method is not to run after treating the symptoms but attack the deep reasons. This book does not mention all the rules of a muslim's life, but only treats the keypoints upon which all the rest depends.

The deep reason of any weakness in religious practice is the weakness of our attachment to Allah and our strong attachment to creatures. This is called the weakness of the faith, as it will be detailed in sha Allah in the next paragraph.

Then this book establishes six levels of faith and three “negative levels”, meaning how deep one is attached to creatures. In other terms three levels of “darkness” after which you reach the “noor” - light – levels.

At last we are suggesting practical means to pass each stage.

The reader just has to find at which of the nine levels he is and make a maximum effort to advance towards Allah.

May I recall that the method in all its details is exclusively based on Coran and Hadeeth. Moreover, it constitutes an analysis and an explanation of “there is no God but Allah, Muhamad is the messenger of Allah” (la ilaha illa Allah, Muhamad rasul Allah).

2 The attachment to Allah and the attachment to creatures

To begin, we need to define precisely the word divinity (ilaha). It is a mistake to think that fake divinities are only statues, cows, fire and material things. In Arabic, “ilaha” means the thing man's heart is attached to, exactly like a child is attached to his parents: as soon as he has a problem or a need, he cries “Dad! Mom!”

The meaning of “la ilaha illa Allah” is divided into three:

- 1) First be attached only to Allah
- 2) Second turn towards Allah only (la maqsuda illa Allah)
- 3) Third worship only Allah (la maabuda beehaqq illa Allah)

Thus shirk (association to Allah) comes into three phases:

- 1) First, the heart is attached to something else than Allah,
- 2) Then, at an event, the heart, the feelings and the thoughts flee to that thing,
- 3) And the person acts according to that thing and it is the worship.

I will illustrate these definitions in sha Allah by three examples.

First example: let's take a person performing his prayers on time. If we ask him why he cares to pray on time, he will say it's compulsory, Allah, our Creator, has ordered it, He promised us Paradise for it and Hell if we don't. But it is possible that this same person will go to work next day and pray his asr after maghrib. If we ask him now where have gone Allah, Paradise and Hell, what will he answer? These actions this person really accomplished for Allah (he never cared about being appreciated by people), how comes he left them for creatures? The

answer is: this person gives priority to his material needs. He also wants Allah and Paradise, but this attachment is weaker and comes in second position. This is why he worships Allah when that doesn't contradict his material life, but when the outcome becomes important enough, he abandons his religious principles for his material needs.

Lets come back to the three components of “la ilaha illa Allah”:

1)Is this person more anxious of his success in his life or hereafter? What does he fear most: Allah's punishment or the boss's penalty? Is he more aware of the angels writing his deeds or of the chief watching him? Is he more confident in the divine richness or the salary sheet? The answer is: the heart of this person is much more attached to the creatures than to the Creator. He may well say: “My God is Allah!”, “Allah is great!”, his heart says something else, his heart says: “My god is money! Money is great!” Actually, his god is money.

2)At work, when asr time arrives, does this person think how he will answer to Allah on Doom's Day if he misses his prayer or how he will answer to his boss if he accomplishes prayer? Does he think that Allah has created his arms and legs, his organs and senses and that He can take them back or does he think that he pays his rent and fees with his salary, and without his salary, it will be the end? The answer is: the feelings of this person rush to creatures and not to Allah.

3)What will he do? Obey to Allah and displease to the boss or disobey to Allah and please the boss? The answer is: he will leave Allah's worship for the worship of money.

Beware! I am not saying you must apply everything in one block and defy the country's laws or the society we live in. I used this example to explain what is faith and worship. But the solution in this case is not only to pray on time. If tomorrow comes a new boss and he opens a mosq in the factory and allows everyone to pray, or the person takes his retirement and now performs all his prayers on time, the situation is unchanged! Be cause, in the heart of this person, the material is always dominating. Even if he prays on time because it is easy in the new situation, Allah knows perfectly well that his god is money. The solution for this person is to take the value of creatures out of his heart and bring in Allah's value. We will come back to this example on level II in sha Allah: attachment to donya.

We can understand the meaning of “eemaan” - faith – through this example. There is a first definition of faith as believing that Allah exists. I am not regarding that faith in this book because even Iblis has it and yet he will be everlasting in Hell. Koran says that eemaan can increase and reach a “true eemaan”. This eemaan is our attachment to Allah: how much we fear Him, we love Him, we trust Him, we desire to get closer to him: this is the level of faith.

Second example: once the prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, read this verse in the mosq: “They (Jews and Christians) took their rabbis and priests as lords besides Allah” (9/31). A Christian entered the mosq at that moment and objected: “They didn't worship them!” and the prophet explained: “They allowed them to do the haram and forbid the halal and they obeyed them: that is their worship”. So the people knew their scholars were changing the religion but they followed them because that served their interests. So they worshiped Allah no longer but their rabbis and priests. That doesn't mean they prostrated to them but they followed the “religion” they invented and left the orders of Allah.

Third example: Iblis, the cursed, Allah called him unbeliever (kafir) because of his pride (takabbur). Though he has never denied the existence of Allah, nor the Day of Judgment, nor any pillar of the faith. When Iblis disobeyed to Allah, it appeared that his faith was not motivated by faith and piousness but by the satisfaction of his ego. He was the best of the jinns, living with angels and holding the second place after Allah. When Allah ordered him to prostrate towards Adam, meaning Adam was better than him and humans were better than

jinns, his pride refused. So, since the very beginning, his worship was not for Allah but for himself. Iblis knew his Creator and Sustainer was Allah (rabbiya Allah), and didn't deny it. But he refused to worship Allah, he couldn't admit "la ilaha illa Allah", thus he was disbeliever.

3 The scheme

As a conclusion to the precedent paragraph, the things worshiped besides Allah are of two sorts:

- 1)material and evident divinities like statues and cows: that is pure fetichism;
- 2)immaterial divinities: we are attached to something, our feelings rush towards it and we obey it.

Any creature can become an immaterial divinity, but all creatures will fit in three cases:

- 1)being attached to one's own value: that's pride (takabbur);
- 2)being attached to one's material life: it's the love of this world (donya);
- 3)being attached to other's appreciations through his good deeds: it's ostentatiousness (riya).

The program consists of getting the false divinities out of one's heart first, then raising oneself in faith's degrees. The scheme is:

- 1)pride
- 2)love of material world
- 3)ostentation
- 4)Allah the Creator
- 5)Allah knows everything
- 6)Confidence and certitude in Allah
- 7)Certitude on the hidden world
- 8)Certitude on Allah's orders
- 9)The goal of prophet, salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam.

LEVEL I : PRIDE

1)The danger of pride

Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "will not enter Paradise anyone who has an atom of pride in his heart", so he will last for ever in Hell. On the other hand, anyone who has an atom of faith, even if he goes to Hell, will after go to Paradise. It results that a pride person cannot have an atom of faith, and that's how Iblis was cursed.

We must clear a point: if someone has no faith (eemaan), that does not mean he is a disbeliever. Allah says: "" (49/14). So the level of faith is higher than the level of Islam. Islam is submission of the body and the faith resides in the heart. It implies spiritual qualities, the first of which is humility and respect towards Allah, men and creatures.

In this verse, Allah gives us the solution to reach the demanded faith: obedience to Allah and his prophet. But it is not enough to obey to physical orders and forget the role of heart and mind. Going from Islam to faith requires effort on our heart as well as on our body.

Indeed, the object of any physical worship is that the mind and the heart follow the acts and words. But if a person worships Allah but his mind and his heart are elsewhere (fascinated by the creatures and by his own person) and he dies with his pride, the hadeeth will apply on him and he cannot access to paradise. Prophet, salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam, gave us many stories about pride worshipers who finish in Hell.

Pride is the worst default that can come in a human's or jinn's heart. So after the physical submission, the first effort to purify one's heart and to go closer to Allah is getting rid of pride.

2) Remedy

In the same hadeeth, prophet, *salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam*, explains pride thus giving us the solution: "Pride is refusing truth and despising people". Those are the two main effects of pride we find in Koran:

a) Accepting truth

"until sin" (2/206). It is the reaction of the heart receiving an advice to feel attacked and to defend itself. We should at the opposite feel that the advice is a help and that the person wants our good and success in this world and Hereafter. This positive reaction is the sign of faith. But that does not mean we should act upon anything we are told. Allah says: "Those who until best" (39/18). So we listen to all advises, whether given wisely or not, would they be right or wrong, convenient or not, then we follow what we think is good. To give an advice, we should seek the wisest terms and means in order to be efficient and protect our good relation with the person. But when we receive an advice, we should accept it anyhow.

If we feel our heart boiling and revolted when receiving an advice, we must try to cool down. Once the emotion is gone, we will say to ourselves: "But my goal is Allah, paradise, and guidance (*hidayat*)... and this person only wants my benefit and wants to help me. I am constantly asking Allah guidance, and Allah wants to guide me by his mean. I should be very happy Allah accepted my prayer and showed me a default I might have taken years to discover. Next time, I will listen very attentively to know my errors and I will strongly thank anyone who will advise me..."

By making this effort, our emotions and reactions will progressively change until our hearts don't reject the truth any more. We can never be sure we have no more pride because there can always be a little bit that will come out one day, but if we have pride we can be sure about it when we notice our hearts rejecting an advice we know to be true, especially if it is said in public or on a hard tone. We must then concentrate our effort on that until we don't know if there is any pride left. Then we concentrate our effort on the next stage and every time the pride reappears we fight it again.

b) Not despising

Despising others is explained by Satan: "I am better than him" (38/76). It is not noticing his defaults or sins, but thinking we will be better than him on Day of Judgment.

We can think: "Oh! Here is such person! Look at his prayer! He really lacks science. Me, I don't commit those errors. He has so many weaknesses... Would he be better than me on Day of Judgment? Impossible!..."

When Satan whispers to us that we are better than such person, we must react immediately. If we let his speech dazzle us and we find it nice and easy, it is the destruction of our hearts.

Lets reply to this trick by radical arguments: we don't know if our prayers are accepted or not, who tomorrow will be believer or not, how will be the rest of our lives and how will be the judgment in front of Allah. We must be worried of our destiny rather than speculate on that of others. By thinking this way, we cannot put ourselves over any muslim. We must fight the whispers of Satan every time they come. When we keep giving the same absolutely logical answers Satan will not be able to fool us any more.

Then, to keep our heart pure, we must not try to know the defaults of others, nor judge them, nor listen to backbiting. If someone says that to us, we must stop him (wisely) or leave. If we hear a bad thing on someone, we must not believe it and imagine other explanations. If we are sure about it we must not despise him but look at our own defaults. And we must never repeat the defaults. Many hadeeths describe the very dangerous punishment of those busy with

others' defaults. Getting busy with others' defaults will necessarily influence the heart and make despise and pride appear and grow.

Yet, we must order good and forbid evil. If we see something bad, to protect our hearts, we must pray Allah to forgive this person, to ease his repentance and guide him. Then comes the wise advice. Because if we don't first turn to Allah Satan can come into our thoughts because he whispers as soon as we forget Allah. Then we might not be quite sincere and our "nafs" can influence us (our ego who says: I am better than him). Prophet, *salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*, used to pray for hours every night for the guidance of people. If we can't do the same, let's try at least to ask Allah in our hearts without moving our lips.

LEVEL II : LOVE OF DONYA

1) Its danger

a) Worshiping desires

Allah says: *"* (25/43). His god is pleasure, money, food, luxury, women... this worldly life, donya. That means his real worry in life is food, clothes, house, family, money... whereas Allah, Hereafter, Hell and Paradise come next. We have detailed this in the example in the introduction.

The attachment to donya is also an unforgivable shirk but, unlike pride, there can be some faith with it. An atom of pride cannot exist with an atom of faith, but it is possible to have in the same time in one's heart attachment to Allah and to donya, and that is the most frequent case. Our heart is then shared between material life and Allah. The more we lean on one side, the more we leave the other. Let's try to discover what is the percentage of our faith compared to our love of donya. Prophet, *salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*, has given us an "eemaanometre" (a tool to measure "eeman", the faith). He said: "If you are pleased with your good action and sad about your bad action you are believer (mumin)". The value we give to good and bad deeds gives us the degree of our faith. If for a person good and bad deeds are equal, that changes absolutely nothing for him, so he has no faith (he is then muslim but not mumin as explained at I.1). The more the person gives value to good and bad actions, the more he has faith. If he gives the true value of actions, his faith is perfect; this will happen after death; that's when everyone will understand the true value of things.

Let's apply this "eemaanometre" to ourselves. If I walk in the street and I loose a 50 cent coin. Will I bother to pick it up or will I leave it? I will take it of course. And 20 cents? I take. And 5 cents? Maybe. And one subhan Allah? I will pass without paying attention and without realizing I am loosing at every second more than all this world contains!

Conclusion: the value my heart gives to "subhan Allah" is less – and far less – than 5 cents! Whereas the reward of this word is a tree in Paradise worth more than the entire planet. So what is the percentage of my faith compared to my love of donya. I divide the value I give to "subhan Allah" by the true value of this word, that is less than 5 cents divided by the worth of the whole planet! An approximate calculation (that we don't need to detail here) to have an idea gives us $1/10^{exp(19)}$ (one divided of faith, meaning one divided by ten million million millions), that is 0,00000000000000000001 % of faith.

The purpose of this demonstration is not to demoralize the reader, but to motivate him in order to seriously attack the donya in his heart. Solutions are developed underneath.

b) Passing by Hell (may Allah preserve us)

Someone worshiping donya will have two essential punishment on the Day of Judgment. Allah can forgive his sins and multiply his good actions, but Allah does not change the condition of a person's heart. And having donya over Allah is an impurity that cannot be

allowed in Heaven. The person will necessarily have to pass by Hell to be purified and then will go to Heaven according to his faith degree. In three verses of the Koran, Allah promises Hell for those who want donya not mentioning unbelieving, association (shirk), hypocrisy (nifaq), or even sins. But in each of these verses, Allah did not say eternal while, often, talking about eternal Hell, Allah says "And evil is the abode of the arrogant" (40/76). This is the first punishment.

Let's take the introduction example of a person not praying on time. Even if this person was in another company or another country where he could pray without problem, the condition of his heart condemns him to loss. His prayers have the same value in both cases, because he is likely to delay them as soon as it will be necessary for his material life. For that reason, a person may never have committed a sin and always respected obligations, but Allah does not accept his actions, because Allah knows that under different circumstances he would have abandoned the religion. Allah says it very clearly in Koran: he whose goal is this present world will necessarily go to Hell.

c) Good actions not accepted

Take a person worshipping Allah and worshipping donya. When comes a priority of donya, he leaves Allah's worship and commits a sin. This worship he was doing for Allah and abandoned for donya, who was he doing it for? Actually, he was worshipping Allah as long as this worship is not opposed to his donya's interests; in such case donya goes first. And worshipping Allah under such or such condition is not sincerity, and a non sincere action is never accepted. So the second punishment of people worshipping donya is that even their good actions are not accepted. Allah says "" 11/15-16. Their actions will be rejected, not accepted and will not worth "hasanat". In fact, these actions are fake, because not based on the faith. The person does not pray, for example, because Allah has commanded him but because he wants; and when he does not want, he leaves it. Within the orders of Allah, he chooses what suits him and leaves what bothers him. So he is not worshipping Allah but his passions.

2) How to get donya out the heart

So it is essential to get the attachment to donya out here rather than getting purified in Hell. For this there is a unique rule: giving the things we are attached to. It is not possible they go out the heart as long as we are keeping them greedily. But we can't get rid of donya's attachment at once, we have to advance progressively. We shouldn't try to accomplish great deeds we cannot continue, but we have to acquire habits that become part of our life and personality. This is why we suggest five steps to get donya out of our hearts

a) Give your leftover

Prophet, *salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam*, said: "Son of Adam, if you give your leftover, it is good for you, and if you keep it it is bad for you". So there is a very simple solution to increase to raise our faith and get donya out of our hearts: look at home everything that has no use: clothes you never wear, shoes you don't use, kitchen furniture still in its box since wedding day, all sorts of things we don't use: gather all that and give them away. You will immediately hear Satan saying: "No, don't give, you are going to need them, and how much it is worth, and the others won't help when you will be in need..." That is what Allah says: "" (2/268). When you will do that, you will feel a lightness and a joy in your heart and an increase in your faith. You then realize that all these things you were jealously keeping were a poison stopping your faith to breathe.

b) Give what you are asked

The second step to get out of the attachment of donya is to give every time we are asked. Indeed, If we give without being requested and we refuse when we are asked that means we only give things we are not attached to and we refuse for the precious ones. This way, attachment to donya will never get out of our hearts. So we should get on giving anything we are asked (as long as it is within our means and in conformity with the orders of Allah), would it be money, food, time, advice, forgiving, help...

When we give something for Allah, Allah will give us two rewards in this life: first, the place this thing occupied in our hearts is immediately replaced by faith, love of Allah and Hereafter. We simply have acquired as much faith as the donya we have given. Secondly, Allah will materially replace this thing. Not only our goods will not diminish, they will benefit of Allah's blessing and protection.

I want to insist before my readers. Some people might find this suggestion difficult. In fact, more we are attached to something, more it is difficult to leave it and more we gain in faith by leaving it. So the more we go forward on this way, the more we take pleasure in faith, and more we want to advance furthermore. But if we refuse to give, we stay stuck on very meaningless things and we deprive ourselves from much higher levels.

I will give you a personal example to illustrate this principle. One day, I was playing football at school. It was a nice match and I was having great fun. I was goalkeeper and they scored me a goal. A young non muslim, 5 years younger than me, came behind me and asked:

Do you need a goal?

Why ?

No, I'm just asking.

In the meantime, I remembered that the previous day I had read and commented in the mosque the saying of a sahabi (prophet's companion): "The prophet, *salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam*, was never asked something and said no". I told him:

You want to be goal?

Yes.

Come in.

I went out the playground near the goal and sat down. I felt a mercy, a light and a serenity coming unto me as I had never felt. Even with a full Ramadan's fast and prayer I didn't gain such a faith. Because at that moment I wanted so much to stay in the goal and I left it for Allah. Ten minutes later, the boy went saying "thank you"; haven't I won?

Dear readers, make your effort to give! Give without hesitating! Give with faith and love! In exchange, Allah give you faith and better goods in this life. The only limit in giving is Allah's laws. Allah does not want us to deprive our family for others, for example. If the wife and children, themselves, want to give, it is good for them, but we should not sacrifice their part for others. For example, we should not give if it is going to be used for a sin. To give alms, we should choose the place Allah prefers rather than giving to the first person. For example, we do not give a thing that will harm our religion. We cannot accept invitation to an insane place. Besides exceptions like these, let's give whatever we are asked.

When we are decided to give whatever we are asked, Allah will test us with people asking us dearest and dearest things. The Prophet (saw), informed us that on Day of Judgment, Allah will tell some persons:

"My servant! I asked you food and you refused to give me.

How could I feed you, will he reply, while you are the Lord of the worlds?

My servant, such person asked you for food and you refused to give him. If you had given him, you would have given Me. My servant! I asked you to drink and you refused to give me.

How could I give you to drink, will he reply, while you are the Lord of the worlds?

My servant, such person asked you to drink and you refused to give him. If you had given him, you would have given Me. My servant, I was ill and you did not visit me.

How could I visit you while you are the Lord of the worlds?

My servant, such person was ill and you did not visit him. If you had visited him, you would have found me near him.”

We should make effort until we take the habit of giving what we are asked even if it is a dear thing. When this stage is about realized, we move on to the next step.

c) Give the dearest

Allah says : [By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of what ye love; and whatever ye give, of a truth Allah knoweth it well] (3/92). We look in our heart which thing we are most attached to and we give it, where it will please Allah most. So, in addition to the two benefits mentioned above (increase of faith and substitution in this life), as we gave the dearest thing, we can now give anything for Allah. The love for other donya things will diminish, and in our heart, the value of Allah will take the first place. We repeat this operation from time to time to maintain the same level.

One important thing in giving is to forgive all the people who harmed us or who will harm us until our death or after our death. It is very bad for our heart to keep bad feelings towards people. The desire of revenge is also a material thing that prevents us from knowing Allah. We should not be worried about the hasanat (good actions) we will take off the unfortunate sinners who harmed us on Day of Judgment, but we should count on the divine mercy. Allah gives his mercy only to those who give it to people, so what do we choose? Divine mercy or hasanat taken from others?

Another important thing to give up is our pride. Generally, we do not accept lack of respect, especially from subalterns (people with less degree than us) or in marital life. We think: “How can I be dishonored while I have so much value?” We have to demolish this “value” we give ourselves and be attached to real values. What's our value in the eyes of Allah? A non-muslim once laughed at an old muslim who was applying the sunna, saying: “Is your beard better or the tail of my dog?” The old man calmly replied: “If my beard is accepted by Allah, it is better than the tail of your dog. But if my beard is not accepted by Allah, the tail of your dog has more value”. Satan hypnotizes us by telling us about our value, so as soon as one disrespects us, our nafs will revolt. A man once went to a shaykh and told him:

Shaykh! I am really nil! I am so zero! I am worth absolutely nothing...

Calm down, calm down, said the shaykh. Don't worry.

After a moment, the shaykh called him:

“Hey donkey! You, the donkey!

How?! What?! Me?! A donkey?!

You said you were worth nothing, so I wanted to raise you up”.

The shaykh proved him that he was lying in his allegations and in fact had a big self-esteem.

In order to give up this self-esteem, any time your nafs rebels, control yourself a maximum then examine your reaction to discover what's wrong with you. Then as soon as Satan flatters us, we must stop him, deny our value and stay attached to the real values.

d) Getting our level of life down to the level of Prophet (s)

Now we go on to the fourth step: cleaning what is left by gradually bringing our level of life down to the level of prophet, *salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*. The simple life is not a purpose for itself, the point is to free time and money for religion. For example, if I have five pairs of

trousers, that is far from prophet's (s) life, I give one and I keep four. If I eat meat seven days a week, I decide to stay one day without meat.

Why depriving oneself? To spend more for Allah. There are so many religious issues lacking financing. If we deprive ourselves to give, we must start by the money left over; this concerns the first three stages. When we live close to poor people or Islamic issues leaders, we understand much more the necessity to diminish our expenses and our love for donya. When we see people in poverty and misery, especially if we pretend to be brothers in Islam, and even more if we try to bring religion to others, we cannot allow ourselves any excess. This is how prophet, *salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam*, was the poorest person, he never refused anything to anyone and didn't keep for himself luxuries others couldn't reach.

I repeat that this change must be very progressive because if we compress our desires too hard, we will bear that a certain time then we will crack. And then we will not only come back to the level we were, but we will need to payback all the pleasures we missed and we will become worse than before. So the solution is to acquire habits over months and years and getting one's family to improve in the same time and not making brutal and unstable changes.

e) The burdens or tests

Then there are some things we are very attached to but we cannot give, like our health, family or identity papers. But it occurs that Allah tests us in these things for example by illness or loosing papers. The one who was attached to the lost thing then feels destabilized, he cannot think of anything else and cannot feel joy or peace until he finds his cherished thing again. In that test, we must make the effort to turn our thoughts and feelings towards Allah so that our heart will tranquilize with the remembrance of Allah and not with the presence of things. You must accept their loss and resign yourself to live without them.

LEVEL III: OSTENTION

1 The danger of ostentation (riya)

The third interior divinity (called “ the little association” by the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him) is to get attached to people words and appreciations and to our reputation. This is ostentation (riya) or trying to be recognized by our good actions.

We have to distinguish riya from the nifaq (hypocrisy). The nifaq is when all actions become riya and the hypocrite has no other objective than showing off. He comes to the mosque without ablution, prays without reciting anything, etc. while the example of riya is someone who performs ablutions at home and noone can see him, so it is for Allah. In his prayer, he recites Al Fatiha, and noone can hear him, it is also for Allah. Then he starts the surat for Allah but increases it for people. In ruku, he makes the tasbeeh for Allah but increases it for people, and so on and so forth.

Finally, around 95% is for Allah and 5% for people. And if one action contains 5% or 1% or 1per million for other than Allah, Allah rejects it totally. From his ablutions in his house till his comes back, nothing is accepted. On the Last Day, this person will have all his action with a small riya cancelled, and only his sincere actions will remain. But they will not be enough to redeem his sins and thank Allah good, because good action can never be enough to compensate a single good from Allah. He will then be facing Allah: if He wants He will forgive, otherwise He will punish.

We see from that Allah does not grant His Mercy to these people. The Prophet, saw, was once questionned : what are the two determining things? He said “ Whoever dies without

associating anything to Allah will enter Paradise (therefore without stopping by Hell) and whoever dies associating one thing to Allah will enter the Fire.” So he will necessarily stop by Hell, then, thanks to his faith (he was nevertheless doing many things for Allah), Allah will bring him to Heaven.

So what determines the direct entry to Heaven or the stop in Hell is the sincerity and the association to Allah, as well as what determines eternity or stop in Hell, is the pride and the faith (may Allah prevents us from Hell).

2 How to acquire sincerity?

a) Equal actions, alone or in public

The first step in acquiring sincerity is purely physical: when we are alone or in group we do not reduce or increase our adorations because they are both *riya*. For example, I am praying alone in my room and someone enters. If I extend my prayer to make good impression, or if I reduce it to hide my piety they are both *riya*. When people are around or watching us, let's imagine they are sheep and worship Allah as if we were alone with Him, without adding or reducing for people.

In this first step, we do not take into account Satan whisperings: “they are seeing you! They will think good of you (or bad)! What are they going to say? Etc...” We put all that aside and worship Allah as if we were alone with him.

b) Flatteries or critics are equal

The second step is that the person flattering or criticizing us is the same. For that Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, was saying when he was flattered: “O Allah! You know better my inside than myself, and I know it better than they do. So do not make me fooled by their words, make me more than what they think and forgive what they don't know.” That way he was closing the door to Satan. As soon as Satan harasses us with his: “They are seeing you! They like you! Etc...”, we should use Abu Bakr invocation, and ask ourselves if Allah is satisfied with us or not, that's the real issue.

Let's say by the way that it is forbidden to flatter people in front of them in order to avoid provoking their vanity. Flattering is useful to give hope back to non practicing or desperate persons because Satan tries to make them lose hope in Allah's mercy. But for practicing trying to get closer to Allah, it is better to advise them by showing them how to correct their default.

c) Do not have vanity

The last step in sincerity is to not fall in the trap of self-confidence (vanity, *'ojb*). We should not be satisfied with our adoration and think to enter Heaven without difficulty. We have to overcome this point in order for our actions to be accepted by Allah, because if we have vanity, even after twenty years of adoration, everything is canceled. The Chafii Imam, mercy be upon him, gave the solution for vanity by saying: “if you fear vanity for your actions think about one of these five things:

Who do you want to please? We are looking for Allah's satisfaction. If for example we have a king as guest, we spend all our money to set the house and meal for the occasion. Despite this, when he will leave, we ask him to excuse us because our welcome does not match his rank. It is the same thing, when comparing our actions to what Allah deserves, we should be ashamed of our unconsciousness in our prayer and our weak adoration rather than being proud of it.

What recompense do you desire? Heaven, of which the m² (one arc in the hadeeth) worths the whole earth and which length is the skies and earth. What have we done to deserve it?

What punishment do you fear? Hell, where the person less suffering has fire under both feet and the heat comes up until his brain and where stays are counted in thousands of years. Who guarantees us that will not go there with all the sins we have done and that we are still doing?

What good are you thankful for? All material or spiritual things with have is a good from Allah we should be thankful for. If five hundred years of pure adoration are not enough to buy one eye, how could we thank Allah for the good of Islam or the prayer?

And what problems (from what Allah saved you) are you mentioning?”. Because it is human nature to implore Allah in difficult time and to forget just after. We try to remember difficult times we had without any mean to overcome it and then Allah eased it all, being material or religious problems, and especially if we promised Allah to thank him.

At last, acquiring sincerity is only a question of control of thought. We should renounce to the pleasure of being appreciated by people and look forward to be appreciated by Allah. Then, we should constantly fight whispering of Satan and not fall into his game.

3 Sincerity in all our actions

When learning sincerity, we learn to do anything for Allah. Even actions which are not really religious become useful to adoration. For example, before eating, we ask ourselves in what intention we are eating. If we are eating for Allah, in order to worship him, why then do we eat when we are not hungry? Why do we eat more than needed? Though we know that excess in eating will make our adoration difficult. So our food is not a worshiping of Allah, but a satisfaction of our desire versus religion. If we want to sincerely worship Allah, all our actions must become adoration. We cannot sincerely worship Allah by putting aside our way of eating, our way of getting money, or our family relationship, or anything else in our live.

Moreover we have a lot to gain. If I respect the prophetic rule of eating only when I am hungry and stopping when I am full, my body will feel more better, I will be more dynamic in everything I do, and I will even more appreciate food because anything taken in excess will loose its taste.

Sincerity also compels us to learn. If we are sincere in our adoration, we cannot afford to doubt between what is legal and illegal, or to do things any how, hoping it is fine. We should learn religion in order to be sure of whatever we do. I will not explain in this book how to learn religion, I wrote another book on it: how to learn Islam.

4 Merit of sincerity

The first merit of sincerity is that all our actions are accepted. Especially our invocations (duaas) are accepted and we see Allah answering our requests in a more and more systematic and obvious way. As far as we are going in the spiritual way, doors of hidden world (ghayb) open. By removing donya from our heart, we see that Allah replaces spent goods. With sincerity, we can immediately have answers of consultation prayers (istikhara) in dreams, and answers of anything we ask Allah.

To understand the situation in the Last Day, lets compare the hadeeth of the one who worshiped Allah for five hundred years and his worship worthed a glass of water, to the hadeeth of the one sincerely giving alms of half a datte and Allah accepts it and multiplies it until it reaches the Uhud mountain. Our adoration by itself will not grant us anything. But Allah multiplies sincere actions so that a sincere and accepted adoration quickly compensates Allah's good. It is by this tremendous multiplication that sincere persons succeed in thanking

Allah's goods and their balance bends on the right side. They then obtain by Allah's grace Heaven without passing by Hell.

IV LEVEL: ALLAH THE CREATOR

1 Allah high

After bringing out creatures from our heart, at least an important part, it is now possible to access divines lights.

Allah teaches us in the Qur'an how to recognise His Highness. First of all, He invites us to meditate and think about His creatures. In fact, it is not possible to directly know Allah or the hidden world (angels, grave, hereafter ...). We should start by using our senses and our reason on creatures around us.

Allah describes in the Qur'an all the creatures, especially those around us, so we can see through them His Highness and His Goods. The first step to apprehend His Highness is to realize the truth behind everything we see. This truth is that Allah has created all these things for us to live and know Him through His creatures. To come to this and come out from unconsciousness (ghafla), we have to evoke Allah (dhikr).

2 Dhikr in the morning and in the afternoon

We make Allah's Highness to penetrate our heart by occupying and directing it toward Allah; it means by doing dhikr (evoking Allah). In the Qur'an, Allah teaches us that the companions (may Allah accept them) were dedicating the time before the sunrise and the sunset to dhikr. For all good action, Islam advises us to make an habit and keep it for ever, because if we decide to make a lot of dhikr without specifying which one and in which quantity, we are going to make it sometimes a lot, then less, then none, then we will go back to our starting point.

The basic dhikr, necessary for every muslim, is the tasbeeh (perfection to Allah), the prayer on the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, the istighfar (ask Allah for forgiveness) and the Coran. There are many other dhikr and invocations in the sunna, but we suggest to have a solid basis and to start with:

- hundred tasbeeh: "subhan Allah, wa alhamdulillah, wa la ilaha illa Allah, wa Allahu akbar, wa la hawla wal la quwata illa billah". The meaning of these words is given below in details.
- Hundred salat on the Prophet, peace and blessing upon him. There are many ways of doing it, the best is the ibrahimiya (the one of the tashahud), the shortest is "Allahumma salli wa sallim 'ala Muhamad".
- Hundred istighfar. The best manner is "Allahumma anta rabbi, la ilaha illa anta, khalaqtani..." but it is long, the shortest is "astaghfirou (roll the r) Allah".
- One hizb (1/60) of the Coran. Those who cannot read or do not easily read, read what they can or learn how to until they can easily read one hizb (20 minutes).

3 Way of doing dhikr

Dhikr has to be done on a regular basis, morning and evening, in every occasion; with or without concentration, when we miss it, we quickly do it. The point is not to gain hasanates, but to work on our heart in order to bring our faith level up. For that, dhikr is a spiritual exercise which requires to be respected with regularity. If we have too much material

obligations, we need to work on the donya to have some free time for religion. If we have too many religious occupations, we have to find a room for dhikr. The regular practice of dhikr is also a way of dominating material constraint. In the beginning, we do the dhikr any how. Then, each session of dhikr is time dedicated to empty our mind from creatures and turn toward Allah. Each time we read a verse or we pronounce a dhikr; we make the effort to understand its meaning until every word we pronounce comes out of from heart and each religious word we hear penetrates our heart. Allah describes true believers like this : [For, Believers are those, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened, and put (all) their trust in their Lord] (8/2). When we start doing dhikr, many thoughts come to us. But these thoughts are not penetrating, they are coming out; like a house full of dust, when we start cleaning it, the dust fills the space, but it's coming out not in. So we need to keep on cleaning until the place is clean. Any time a thought distracts us from dhikr, we send it away and get back to dhikr, until our mind is clear and we feel the words with our heart like a movie we are watching without being tired and without making effort.

4 Meaning of dhikr

When we are able to follow words we pronounce, we think about Allah by meditating on creatures. For example: my body, subhan Allah (perfection to Allah), how He created its chromosomes, its cells, its tissues, its organs, its apparels and gave it life. Alhamdulillah (praise be to Allah) who gave it to me by His kindness. La ilaha illa Allah, to him I attach myself, Him I love, Him I fear, Him I adore, and not my body; because it is Allah who created it and gave it, and it is to serve Him I shall use it, not for ephemeral purposes. Allahu akbar, my body illustrates the greatness of Allah but His power is definitively greater and my body is nothing in front of health, intelligence and beauty Allah is capable of creating. Another point is the benefit I can have from Allah (by using my body as He wants) is tremendously greater than the one I can have (by using it as I want). La hawla wa la quwata illa billah: all strength and power belong to Allah, I do not count on my body and my means but on Allah.

We repeat twice or three times the tasbeeh regarding a creature until following the meaning of what we are saying. It is easier to concentrate our mind on one creature and to apply on it all the words: “ subhan Allah, wal alhamdulillah...” than to think about Allah's perfection on a general basis, then to Allah's goods, etc... Since we can only know Allah through His creatures, it is not efficient to try to directly think about Allah's attributes.

Thus, through any of His creature, we can concentrate our mind in order to feel Allah's greatness and goods. This leads to bring out the value of this creature off our heart and replace it by Allah's value. Then many ways are possible to make hundred tasbeeh:

- either we start by the creatures closest to us: our heart, our brain, our body, our food, animals, rain, earth, sun, stars, skies, angels, Allah's throne, Heaven, then we think about Allah himself.
- Either we take a creature bothering us in our heart, and we repeat the tasbeeh hundred time concentrating on it.
- Anyone while doing the dhikr will feel what he needs, or let his thought flies as the tasbeeh goes on

The salat on the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, means that we are asking Allah to grant His Mercy and Blessings to the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him. Allah is already granting him without us asking Him, like He is Great without us saying it, but it is our way of thanking the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, and be grateful to him.

We can think about qualities and merits of Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him; during the hundred salat (especially his worry and sacrifice for our salvation) or follow his merits and sacrifice from the beginning to the end of his life, and how he receives news from his community in his grave and prays for them, and how on the Day of Judgment he will intercede for his community, and even in Heaven he will intervene for the remaining muslim in Hell until they all get into Heaven. At last, anyone can think about the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, the way he wants to.

By doing the istighfar, we try to remember all our sins, from the most important to the smallest, the oldest to the most recent, and we try to think about the seriousness of these sins and to repent. Another way to concentrate only on one sin that we still commit to convince ourselves to repent and ask Allah to ease the repentance. In the explanation of the verse: "And are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done." (3/135), Ibn Abbas said: "Anyone who asks Allah for forgiveness did not obstinate in his wrong". Even if we cannot stop a sin, we do not forget about it and worship Allah as if nothing was going on, but rather, put it in the spotlight in our relationship with Allah, and constantly ask Allah for forgiveness and repentance.

5 After the dhikr

Then, when we see our body or any other creature, we remember Allah, until all that we see reminds us of Allah. Like we give in our mind a name and attributes to each thing, the attribute that each thing reminds us becomes "subhan Allah, alhamdulillah..." Until realizing that we are surrounded by creatures and keeping in mind Allah's presence. We use verses of the Coran mentioning different creatures to link them to Allah. We also use duaas (invocations) of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, in every occasion to meditate a little on Allah during each duaas. We reach the first degree of "illa Allah": Allah the creator. But the dust which came out should not come back into our heart, for that we protect our ears, tongues, eyes and thought from forbidden, then useless things and any thing that distract us from Allah. Because if we continue discussion, frequentations and activities which do not get us close to Allah, on the next session of dhikr, it will be very difficult to concentrate again. This is why this step can only be done after bringing out an important part of creatures from our heart. We will notice that if one single creature constantly prevents us from going to Allah, it means that it is still in the heart and we need to work on it once more. Now a new sacrifice is requested: creatures that we brought out from our heart need now to get out from our mind. For our mind to be constantly filled with Allah's reminding, we need to make the decision of leaving all that distracts us from Allah. Or else, we let our mind and our heart floting among creatures and we choose a worshipping limited to gesture.

6 Merits of dhikr

Dhikr allows a tremendous opening of knowledge and comprehension of religion. We just need to concentrate on the tasbeeh, the Coran, the prayer, the hadeeth, or any other religious action or word for Allah to reveal us obvious truth that we do not see. Dhikr enables to understand religion, faith and Coran more deeply. But be careful! We need to verify all the things we begin to understand with the Coran and the hadeeth. Religion is not based on miracles and dreams but on the Coran and the hadeeth. For example, we cannot interpret the Coran according to our feelings and own logic. We need to go back to the explanation of our Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and his companions, which give us a framework, in which we must remain, but where we can meditate and grow. If we go deeper in the dhikr

and we are not scrupulous in learning, we are likely to get lost. We will not be able to distinguish divine enlighten, satanic whisperings and divagation of our imagination. Then we will find ourselves saying and practicing wrong thing thinking we are in the truth. Examples of this are numerous, and it is very important to well know our religion in order to progress in the spiritual path. I have already explained in the previous step that sincerity leads us to distinguish the lawful and the unlawful, the right and the wrong. This must be acquired for the coming steps.

Now how to learn the science? Because there are some approaches of the Islamic science which lose more than they guide. I invite you to read my other book "How to learn islam".

Thanks to dhikr, Allah opens little by little doors of Ghayb (hidden world). I would like to say that there are two fields where we can only enter with a divine authorization: interpreting dreams and relationships with djinns (preaching djinns or healing from djinns or sorcery). For these two fields, the first condition is learning and the second one is personal skill. This last condition can only be appraised by Allah and only Allah can authorise someone to get involve in it. This authorization is a divine sign coming into a dream or something else. Without this sign, the person should not get involve in interpreting dreams or dealing with jinns because he is likely to make mistake.

We first evolve in dhikr in evocation and Coran. Then, our prayer improves. Then while listening or talking about religion, our heart turns to Allah and absorbs all the words. Then, our heart becomes more present in worshipping. At last, in all our life, we are with Allah. All around this evolution, the quality of our worshipping gets better. Someone asked the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, "Who is the best warrior?"

- The one evoking Allah the most, he said.
- And the best among those who pray?
- The one evoking Allah the most.
- And the best among those who fast?
- The one evoking Allah the most.
- And the best of those giving alms?
- The one evoking Allah the most". He mentioned pilgrimage and other pious actions.

Since the aim of any physical action in Islam is touching the heart, a worshipping without the heart is an empty action. It has a reward because the person made an effort, but this reward is limited because the person has submitted his body to Allah, but kept the most precious which is the spirit and heart for creatures.

We have previously seen that with sincerity, Allah multiplies actions in quantities. But here, when we go from physical adoration to adoration with the spirit and the heart, the quality of the adoration is the one tremendously increased.

LEVEL V: ALLAH 'S SCIENCE

1 Allah sees us

Then we think about creatures in detail. For example my body: Allah created each cell and its components, each organ and its functioning system, each chemical exchange occurring. We then realise that all these information are in front of Allah like a page, not like a book of which we have to turn the pages; Allah sees everything, knows everything in the same time.

Then we feel that Allah knows us and constantly sees us.

Concentration in prayer comes at this point. In fact, if a person prays and another one come in front of her and starts looking at him into his eyes and follows his moves, he will be extremely annoyed, may be upset and will not be able to stop thinking about this person. The same when we will start feeling that Allah is looking at us and that we will stand in front of Him, saying Allahu Akbar, we will be astonished in front of Allah greatness and we will not be able to think about something else during a moment.

2 Explanation of the Fatiha

Now what to do, what to say in front of Allah? [Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds]. Let's insist on the meaning of the word Rabb translate by Lord. The textual meaning is : "The one who raises, who educates", like parents for the child: they gave him life, feed him, dress him, teach him how to speak and to walk... The same way, Allah takes care of existence. So praise to Him from our heart for all the good in us and around us. This word is the first reaction Allah expects from us: knowing our Creator and be grateful to Him. More deeply we feel "Lord of worlds", more deeply we will say "Praise to Allah", until it takes all our heart and cleans us from any attachment to creatures.

Then [Ar-Rahman] is the All Merciful giving His mercy in this world to believers and non believers. All the goods Allah gave us contributing to our survival or our comfort come from this mercy, as well as love between mankind or animals, is part of this mercy. Not only Allah created and manages this world, planned needs of all creatures and takes care of it, but He also does it by mercy. Let's take for example this Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, invocation coming out of toilets: "Praise be to Allah who made me taste his pleasure, who kept his strength in me and who took its bad out of me." A triple good from Allah! We enjoy eating, what is useful is kept in our body, and excrements are rejected so we are relieved. When I had surgery from amygdalae, my throat was so painful that I did not want to eat anymore. Then my stomach was more painful because I was very hungry. So I was eating a little to ease my stomach pain. And I was eating again when the pain was becoming serious. Allah could have created life like this: from pain to pain, but He made it in such a way that we are going from happiness to happiness.

[Ar-Rahim] is the Very Merciful who is good only with believers on the Day of Judgment. Here, our thought moves from this world to the hereafter, and we have hope because this mercy is much more important than the one here: the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, informs us that Allah has shared His mercy in hundred parts, He sent one on earth and shared it between all the creatures from the beginning to the end of creation, even the animal raising its foot in order to avoid killing its baby thanks to this mercy, and He kept the 99% for the Last Day, only for believers. We also fear because it will not be given to everybody.

[Master of the Day of Judgment]. The word "deen" has two meanings which can be linked here: the debt, and our debt towards Allah is: to obey Him, thank Him for His goods and have redemption for our sins; it is religion, and religion is what we owe Allah. These debts belong to Allah (Maalik=owner) and He uses it (Malik=king) as He wishes. So our salvation will totally depends on Allah: if He wants, He will forgive us, if He wants He will punish us.

But Allah does not act randomly, He does not give His mercy on a bias basis, it depends on our qualities and actions. Allah says: [For the mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good] 7/56. we notice that in this world, Allah gave everything and manages everything, and in the hereafter, He is the one owing everything, so we involve without condition in worshipping Allah [Thee do we worship] and we get rid off all our programs, our ideas and our habits to submit our life to Allah. Yes, nothing can give us anything in this life

or in the other except Allah. So any action, time, expense, thought, feeling we dedicate to other than Allah is a loss that we will never catch up; and with heavy consequences in this life and in the hereafter. So our only and unique principle in life is to get close to Allah, to please Him, worship Him, erase ourselves and our desire, our thought, habits, weakness in front of His will. And truly, this is the salvation that will save us on the Last Day: sincerely worship Allah, without any other god, without anyone else in or life.

But saying this, we know that we are weak and we will not be able to keep this promise; how many big decision have we made that we could hardly bear, but also [and Thine aid we seek] to correctly and continually worship You. Yes, we cannot count on our own means to move towards Allah, obey Him, avoid what is forbidden, to acquire the science, to reach the real prayer, and to be full of His love, but while making efforts, we should try to benefit from His generosity and tremendous wealth.

What we exactly ask fro [Show us the straight way] meaning the right path, continuity and perseverance in religion; meaning when we practice something, it is for ever no matter what happens and in every circumstances: my prayer on time until I die, my daily Qu'ran until I die, not once do I deliberately leave one action because I busy doing something else. How come we know that such and such is good but we cannot do it? This is lack of motivation and will, and its weakness of the faith which makes that we are not sensitive to divines things while as soon as it comes to material we really know what to do. The "heedaya" is the increase of the faith. So : O Allah! Gives us motivation and enthusiasm to go to your satisfaction without attraction to what you dislike. This is the key point of the Fatiha, et and of any prayer: ask Allah the "heedaya".

On what way do we want to be straight? [The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy grace]. According to the Coran, there are four category of persons: prophets, so the purpose of our life should be effort in religion, the "daawa" (preaching) et that Allah uses us to spread religion. Then the truthful "seedik, who have quasi total trust and faith in Allah, so we make daawa with strong certitude on Allah. The martyrs who sacrificed everything for Allah, so lets preach with certitude and by progressively sacrificing secondary then essential then vital things until dying in making daawa. Desiring to be a martyr and the biggest sacrifice implies that we do not pay attention to the small inconvenient on the way. At the last the pious ones, meaning follow the sunnah, the prayer with concentration, science, evocation of Allah, generosity, respect of muslims, sincerity,...

[Those whose portion is not wrath, and who go not astray], meaning the Jews who know the truth and refuse it and the Christians who do not know it. Here, we look at our life: which part comes from the people Allah likes and which one from Jews and Christians? We notice that this dialogue is in plural and that we are speaking on behalf of the community. And how many muslims are on the way of Jews and Christians? So we ask Allah to change the world situation and to put us and all the muslims back on the way of the companions. We also have to know that by saying these words, we should be afraid, very much afraid, because even if we apparently on the right way for now, who can tell us that we are being accepted, and moreover, that we will remain on it? The thing that we must fear the most is to die outside religion, and no one is protected from that. How come a practicing person who has devoted all his life to Allah can die in as a sinner or unbeliever? Allah says: [If ye are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you; but if ye show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed] (14/7). So may be because we are not grateful enough of Allah's good, and because we disobey Him despite all that we have, we might be close to be ejected from His mercy and thrown out in unbelieving.

3 The prayer forbidding bad

Then we read the Coran, the Coran will give details on a meaning we saw in the Fatiha, whether it is talking about the universe and its creation, Allah's good, the end of the world, Hell and Heaven, good actions and sins, past stories where prophets and believers were fighting unbelievers.

After that, we bent and what we read of the Coran will be perfectly resumed in "perfection to my Tremendous Lord", because all the mentioned meanings show Allah greatness. Then we prostrate saying "perfection to my Lord most High", and here we think about the greatness and the elevation of Allah but only toward us, and not toward the creation of the world or something else. This is where we are closer to Allah in our heavenly journey.

Then we go back to our starting point, and, with the Fatiha, we continue with our thinking and feelings by praising Allah Lord of the universe. Besides, the "Allahu Akbars" all along the prayer are important to keep the continuity of our thoughts.

At last, how can we, when we are in front of Allah, go and leave Him? We sit down with respect and humbleness and say: "Greetings to Allah, all good things are for Allah, the good prayers are for Allah, then we greet the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him and the whole of pious people, then we ask to be with them by reciting shahada. Then we disembark by greeting the people and the angels around us that we have left for a marvellous journey where the first "Allahu Akbar" was the take-off and the salam was the landing.

5 Al-Ihsaan: worship of quality

a) A necessary training

The second level of knowing Allah: "Allah sees us and hears us" comes first in prayer (it even is the purpose of the prayer) then propagates and persists in all our life. So, after zikr, we train to pray feeling Allah is looking at us. This requires a strong and regular training: first of all, the compulsory prayers in jama'at, then sunnas before and after the five prayers, then nafilas that are of two kinds: the daily ones related to a fixed time and the non-daily ones. We need at this level of prayer not to pass a long time without prayer and to pass long moments in prayer.

b) The four nafilas

This is why we suggest in addition to the farzs and sunnas to practice regularly the daily nafilas:

- Shurooq: after subh, make zikr until the sun rises, add 15 minutes and pray two or four rakaat.
- Dhuhaa: 2 to 12 rakaat in the morning.
- Awabeen: Six after maghrib.
- Tahajjud: 11 after isha.

We make these four nafila as we do the zikr: whatever happens, with or without concentration, if we miss them, we pay them back, and we don't leave them. Then we train to concentrate in the prayers.

The prayer is a time dedicated to make effort on oneself to turn our thoughts and feelings towards Allah. We should not pray wanting to "finish" the prayer or waiting impatiently that the imam finishes, but we should try to take maximum benefit from the prayer time, because it is amongst the most precious time of our life. Whenever we pray, would it be compulsory or sunna, in group or individual, silent or loud, long or short, we do our best to concentrate.

Concentration goes through these stages:

- First we try to pray understanding what we say or hear. It is not useful to imagine that Allah is looking at us or that death is threatening us if we don't understand the words of the prayer. This requires a minimum of knowledge: those who don't understand Arabic must learn word by word the meaning of Fatiha, prayer azkar, tashahhud and small soorats.

- When we reach to understand without effort what we are saying, we become conscious we are speaking to Allah. The words we are reciting are in dialogue mode: “You we worship...” “Glory to my Lord...” and the Coran is the words of Allah directed to us. So in the same time we understand what we say and we are conscious we are speaking to Allah.
- Then we become conscious that He hears us and listens to us; our prayer becomes stronger and stronger.
- Then we realize that Allah sees us, in addition to what we feel already. We must not focus on the fact Allah is listening to us or looking at us and forget the meaning of what we are saying. We must continue concentrating on the words of the prayer and our consciousness of Allah will just increase.
- There are other levels of concentration where Allah will unveil for us the hidden world: it is the high level of ihsan: worshipping Allah as if we see him. This will be developed in sha Allah in level VII.
- Then this feeling will continue in our life. It is not repeating all the time: “Allah is looking at me”, but meditating deeply on creatures, on our deeds, on the prayers rasool Allah salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam taught us to recite in all situations... We must live our life and do whatever we are doing and concentrate on Allah until we feel he is looking at us, and not disconnect from our reality and try to forget it to think of Allah.

One of the easiest ways of concentrating in prayer is to insist on sujud. Let's take the time to make a long sujud and repeat only “subhana rabbiya al-a'la”, Glory to my very high Lord. We will repeat this formula as much as necessary until we understand each word. The first one to concentrate on is “rabbi”: my Creator, who shaped me, who gave me my image, who made me as I am, who allows me to think, to see and walk, who feeds me, takes care of me and gives me all I need. “Rabbi” resumes all Allah did for us, as the word “daddy” resumes all what the father did for his son. We repeat until we realize we are talking to our Creator and calling Him “Rabbi”. Then we concentrate on “subhana rabbi”: subhan Allah means He is pure and exempt of defaults and lacks. What are the defaults and lacks people give to Allah and Allah says He is exempt of it? Allah says: “Subhan Allah of what they describe” and “Subhan Allah of what they associate” (23/91-92): they say He has a child and associates. We know Allah has no children and we don't worship anything else, but there is a kind of minor association which is giving to creatures the value that belongs to Allah. So think of any lack you have in religion, would it be a sin you commit or a good deed you neglect, consider this situation and look how Allah has created you and given you everything and you do not give Him His value and you prefer money, easiness, or you fear creatures or whatever reason preventing you from pleasing him and repeat “subhana rabbi”: my God! You created me, You have given me everything, and I am leaving You and leaving Your will and running after creatures?! Really, I have not given You Your value and I have considered You so low! You are pure and over the value I have given You and the position where I have put you! When you get to concentrate on this, don't stop: continue looking at the gifts of Allah and your ungratefulness. Then the word “al-a'la” follows naturally: He is the Highest, over any value I can give Him. We then continue until we feel Allah listens to us, then that He sees us.

A special event will then certainly happen: when you will come back to the situation where you show your ungratefulness towards Allah, you will remember all you have been saying in sujud and you will not be able to still behave badly towards Allah. Those thoughts we have meditated in prayer will make pressure on us and compel us to behave as He likes. This is how prayer forbids evil.

In my beginnings in Islam, I asked myself how should the prayer forbid the evil? I pray, I try to pray correctly, to go to mosque etc. I also try to avoid sins, to control my tongue, etc. But I don't see the relation between my prayer and my sins, actually I don't see any influence of my

prayer on my life. The same way I try to pray correctly, the same way I try to avoid sins. It took me twelve years to understand by what way the concentration and the benefit of prayer would actually change the person until his behaviour changes and he will leave sins. Concentration, understanding and meditation of the contents of prayer increase imaan, rise the consciousness of the person and cause the repentance so that the person ending the prayer is not the same as the one who started and he will no longer behave the same. May Allah allow us to benefit from our prayer.

c) Virtue of ihsaan

Everyone can understand that if he feels Allah looking at him, he becomes another person. No more satanic temptations, no more bad thoughts, no more rushed worship, no more laziness, no more lack of will, no more useless discussions, no more waste of time, etc. he becomes a superman. How can we describe his spiritual power and his highness over creatures and common beings? He realises all people are slaves to their nafs (ego) and unaware of Allah, and he has himself spent so many years in this state of lethargy even though he was practicing religion and making many efforts. A new person is awakened in him.

Dear readers, double your motivation to get your heart rid of donya to access to this knowledge of Allah before death comes and you will be deprived of it for ever. Indeed, as soon as we make intention, Allah gives us the reward; but this counts only for actions and not for qualities. You cannot just desire to have a complete faith in order to have it on Day of Judgment; the faith with which we die is the one we will find on Doom's Day.

This is the first level of ihsaan (quality worship): worshipping Allah knowing He sees us. What will be on Day of Judgement the reward for the person who reached this stage?

- Allah will wipe out his sins and not ask him for them.
- Allah will count his deeds like the best ones he ever did. Allah will take the best prayer of his life, the one he was feeling in front of Allah from beginning to end, where concentration was the strongest, and will count all his prayers like that one. The same for all other actions. Such tremendous divine kindness. [Is the reward for ihsaan other than ihsaan?] (55/60). The good reward for the good worship. Allah has an enormous kindness, and He is only waiting for our effort to give it us.

In the previous level of zikr, the more our heart turns toward Allah and the more the quality of our deeds raises. Here, we reach the quality demanded which is feeling Allah sees us. When we reach to perform prayer and other deeds this way, Allah by His tremendous kindness will raise all our prayers and worships to this level of quality.

LEVEL VI : CERTITUDE ON ALLAH – YAQEEN

1 The fear of Allah

When we get the feeling **that** Allah sees us and knows us, a great fear of Allah will take us, because He is capable of taking everything from us and do what He wants of us. He mentions it several times: [Say ye, - if your stream be some morning lost (in the underground earth) who then can supply you with clear-flowing water], [Think ye, if Allah took away your hearing and your sight, and sealed up your hearts, who- a god other than Allah- could restore them to you] (6/46). And many other verses in the same meaning, until Allah says to His Prophet (s): [If it were Our Will, We could take away that which We have sent thee by inspiration: then wouldst thou find none to plead thy affair in that matter as against Us, Except for Mercy from thy Lord: for his bounty is to thee (indeed) great] (17/86-87).

2 Certitude on Allah

When comes this fear of Allah, the fear of creatures disappears. We become conscious that Allah knows the movements of each creature, He allowed this movement, He wanted it and

He ordered it. We are no longer influenced by good and bad things happening to us and we only have fear and hope in Allah. Then the heart finds peace remembering Allah as Allah says: [] (14/29). That means all that happens around us does not affect the remembering of Allah in our hearts and our relation with Allah is not interrupted by anything.

When our hearts are no longer influenced by creatures and direct entirely towards Allah, creatures can no longer harm us And Allah is with us: [] (65/3). It is the certitude (yaqeen) and the third level of knowing Allah: Allah does it all.

3 Asking Allah

This quality is acquired by asking everything from Allah. Prophet, *salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam*, taught imaan and certitude to Abdallah Ibn Abbas saying: “Boy, I will teach you some words. Take care of Allah, He will take care of you. Take care of Allah and He will protect you. When you ask, ask Allah. When you ask for help, ask Allah. Be sure that if all the people grouped to advantage you, they can only give you something Allah has previously programmed for you. And may they all gather to harm you, they could only do what Allah has already decided. The pens (of destiny) are lifted and the books are dry”.

This hadeeth gives us two steps to reach certitude:

- First, obeying to Allah; then Allah will protect us, bless us and help us in our lives. This divine intercession increase our faith in the invisible
- Secondly asking all we need to Allah only. Indeed, asking another than Allah and thinking that creatures can solve our needs is a direct contradiction with the confidence in Allah.

Let's take a simple example: I am eating and I need salt. Directly, I consider that if I ask my mother or my brother I will immediately obtain salt, but if I ask Allah, how will the salt come? The lack of confidence in Allah starts here! If I doubt Allah can give me salt, how can I trust Him in more difficult circumstances? And the effort must go up to there! Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “Ask Allah even for salt”.

We start by asking Allah our most important matters by using the specific prayers taught by Prophet (s): soorat Waqiaa every evening against poverty, last three soorats against the evil of the night, prayers against enemies, Satan, debts, illness, insomnia, consultation prayer, etc. To enhance our demands, we use need prayer, fasting, sadaqa, etc. Without forgetting our religious needs: guidance for us and others, forgiveness, science, continuity, avoiding sins, etc. In the same time we learn to ask Allah for the simplest things (like salt) even in our hearts without moving our lips.

When Allah answers our requests, our faith and confidence in Him increase until our hearts will turn towards Him directly. We no longer think that creatures can solve our needs and they don't influence us any more.

4 Virtue of certitude

At the previous level of ihsaan, sins were forgiven and the quality of our actions was raised to the highest we ever did. And if the person goes one step forward and reaches certitude, what will Allah the Almighty grant him? Allah will dismiss him from counts, like a diplomat returning to his country is dismissed from customs procedure: as he comes down the airplane, a car is attending him to drive him to destination. If he stops in any airport, the honour room will be opened for him. Those people receive a special reception on Day of Judgement and will be driven to Paradises neighbouring Allah without being asked for counts.

LEVEL VII: CERTITUDE ON THE HIDDEN WORLD

1 The high level of ihsaan

In the previous stages, we have understood the reality of the world surrounding us: creatures are only a way to show Allah's greatness and they are under His command and directed by is

will. We can now reach the invisible world (ghayb). Feeling the action of Allah in our world as a consequence of previous stages allows us to feel this hidden world.

Our faith in this hidden world that Allah and his Prophet (s) describe to us will increase until reaching the belief we have in material world. We are then as much influenced by the material and immaterial realities. The power of angels, anger and love of Allah, Apocalypse, the events in the grave, and all the immaterial realities will affect us as we are affected by money, family, documents, and material matters. In other words, we are affected by ghayb as if we see it. We then reach the high level of ihsaan: worshipping Allah as if we see Him and we see the things He tells us about. This is how some sahaba said that if the veil will be lifted and they see Heaven and Hell that will not increase their imaan; their desire of Paradise or fear of Hell will not increase. So their effort for religion will not change “after seeing” so strong was their faith.

This is the first degree of Muhammad rasool Allah, peace and blessings be upon him: the certitude on what he said and reported on behalf of Allah, that means the certitude on the hidden world (ghayb), on promises and warnings of Allah, on Day of Judgement, Hell and Paradise.

2 Practical teaching

a) Listen and meditate

Take people watching a horror film. When reaching certain scenes, they will shout: “Aaah!!” Why do they shout? First of all, the whole film is a fiction (nothing is real): the actor does not really die, no harm touches him, the killer is just an actor working to feed his children, etc. After the acting, they will all have a big laugh about it, greet each other and return to reality. And even if the film was real, the viewers are not inside and no harm can reach them. So why do they shout? They shout because they are so influenced and they feel the film like a reality. In such way – and even more – should we be influenced by the words of Allah and his Prophet, *salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*. This will come by listening a lot and thinking and meditating deeply on these words, and imagining these things and scenes for all elements of ghayb: angels, skies, Chair, Throne, Doom’s Day, Day of Judgement, Hell and Heaven.

These sciences of the invisible cannot be acquired like material sciences. You can’t just learn something then say: “OK, now I know it”. We must work on this material, meditate on it and give it the first place in our life to realise our faith in it.

b) Details of Paradise and Hell

For example, Prophet (s) said: “A place of a bow in Paradise (half a square meter) is better than this world and what it contains”. We think and imagine what this earth of Paradise is made from so that a half square meter would be better than our entire world?! We try to imagine its matter, its softness, its beauty and its light. If so is the earth of Paradise, how is the tree whose trunk is gold and leaves are precious stones?! And the best thing in the tree is its fruits, so how are these fruits from a tree growing in an earth whose square meter is better than our world, whose trunk is gold and whose leaves are precious stones?! A single bite from this fruit will give you more than all the pleasures of this world added together!! I will not go furthermore in Paradise description in this book but I want to say we should discuss often and deeply because when we speak of Paradise we feel we are there and donya becomes so little to us.

In the same way, Prophet, *salla allahu alayhi wa sallam*, said: “The person suffering least in Hell is a man with two burning charcoals under his feet boiling his brain”. Close your eyes one minute and imagine you are in his place. Heat rises from feet to head and the brain is boiling, so how are the feet? This person is not even touched by the fire, so how is the one who has shoes of fire, then fire to the knees then to the waist then completely in the fire that is 70 times stronger than the fire of this world?! Then others are locked in a fire called *Hutama* (the Demolisher) who consumes them instantly and entirely up to the heart, then their body is

remade instantly and that is repeated eternally... The worst in the bottom of Hell are the source of the fire: the fire bursts from their bodies to burn the others...

By speaking continuously of these things their value will enter in our hearts.

c) Listening daily and regularly

Sahaba had these discussions daily in mosque, house, market and everywhere. We must try to listen to this discussion daily and regularly at least once in our mosque then try to take this atmosphere with us everywhere we go and particularly in our house.

Then we learn and train to read or listen to the words of Allah and Prophet (s) with concentration. Sahaba listened to Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, with such concentration that you could think they had birds over their heads and they were staying still so they don't fly away.

Once we are concentrated and we follow the words one by one, we will imagine these things as if we are seeing and living them. Sahaba said that when Prophet (s) talked to them about Hell and Heaven, it was as if they were seeing it.

Then we will be really affected by these words because the effect of seeing is much stronger than hearing. They were so affected, some sahaba died when hearing description of Paradise and some died when hearing about Hell.

LEVEL VIII : CERTITUDE ON ACTIONS

1 Link between the invisible world and actions

More we get the value of Paradise, Hell, qualities of Allah, His actions and His greatness, the more we understand the link between these invisible things and the life we live every minute: it is the influence of each of our movements, words and thoughts on this invisible world.

For example: one of the simplest good deeds is to say "subhan Allah". The moment you say it, Shaytan cannot whisper to you, Allah mentions us because he says: [] (2/152), the angels write this action, we increase our value, our love and proximity with Allah, you increase your credit in protection and blessings of Allah and accepted prayers when you will need Him, Allah prepares us a tree in heaven whose trunk is gold, whose leaves are jewels and whose fruits are eternal and more delicious than all what's on earth, this tree alone is worth more than the kingdom of Sulayman, alayhi salam.

A prayer of two rakats in the morning is equal to 360 "subhan Allah". How then is its reward?

If we pray twelve rakats in addition to the compulsory ones, Allah builds us a castle in Paradise. The morning or the evening prayer performed in the mosque is equivalent to praying half of the night. What tremendous rewards we can get every day, without making any effort! If we invite a person to pray and Allah guides him through us, we get in fifteen minutes the reward of all the prayers and good actions of his life!

If we consider sins the same way, Prophet, saw, said : "Allah is jealous, and His jealousy occurs when a person commits a sin". Allah hates when we commit sins like we cannot stand someone touching our wife or our mother. Understanding this, we see the danger in sins as a cable of 10 000 volts of tension that no one dares to touch.

Thus good actions become more important than wealth or poverty or comfort and discomfort. We then realize that material constraints are just a necessity and our goal is to worship Allah. So for Sahabas, gold and earth had same value and they never allowed a reduction of their religious practice for donya advantages. We reach the second level of Muhammad rasul Allah,

saw: certitude that success lies on his actions and his way. We are no longer looking for this world glory and our heart is not bothered for changes in material situation.

2 Practical mean

We must create among us an environment of actions values, meaning, continuously remind and encourage ourselves for good actions. For example :”My brother! Evoke Allah! Do you realize! Allah is watching you, angels are writing down your actions. Allah prepared this or that for you in Paradise ...”

We must in the same time, avoid motivation for material values: talking about good business, pleasures, problems, etc. When these subjects are mentioned for a religious reason, we need add Allah’s reminder to the discussion, like He teaches us: [“Why didst thou not, as thou wentest into thy garden, say: Aallah’s will (be done)! There is no power but with Allah”] (18/39).

In addition to the effort to create this environment, we must struggle to think about vertus of actions while doing each action. By keeping in mind hadeeth related to the action we are doing, we feel the importance of this action and strongly attached to it.

LEVEL IX: THE GOAL OF THE PROPHET

1 The concern for others

When we feel the necessity to achieve good things and to avoid bad things we feel the seriousness of people living and dying without faith and good deeds. We then get extremely sad and concerned for them. The same way we cannot accept to die without faith or without doing our prayers and we cannot accept to exchange it for material things, we cannot see people living and dying without faith and prayer without doing anything about it.

This is the feeling of the prophets and the basis of preaching (daawa). Without this concern and love for others wellbeing, preaching Allah and being active in Allah’s religion loses its sense, because this preaching and effort are based on a false motivation. The motivation of all prophets that Allah describes in the Quran is the love for people wellbeing, pity for them and advising them from the bottom of their heart.

2 Learn this concern

To be able to feel this concern we need to preach, in the beginning without concern or sadness for people, the same way we do our prayer without concentration but in order to learn concentration. The more we preach, the more the concern and the value of religion increases in our heart, until we do not leave any occasion of giving daawa, and until the concern and preoccupation do not let us rest without daawa. And until we dedicate our time, belongings, thoughts and feelings to save them. This is how we will get to understand the life of the Prophet, pbuh, and sahabas. The centre of their life was effort of spreading the religion. This is the third level of Muhammad, pbuh, and his goal and this becomes our own goal.

It is the goal of the Prophet and the one of every muslim that Allah describes: [Say: “this is my path: I invite to GOD, on the basis of a clear proof, and so do those who follow me”] (12/108).

When we start being involved in religion, we get Allah's help and assistance. With this help, we can overcome all the obstacles until the objective of spreading the divine mercy is reached. When Allah uses us to spread His religion, we get rewards of masses of people guided through us. The Prophet, pbuh, have said that on The Day of Judgement some people will be followed by crowds and will have so much light that prophets will wonder: "Who is this prophet? We do not know him". Angels will reply: "He is not a prophet. He is a muslim from the community of Muhammad. And those are the people he preached and who were guided through him".